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Fern notes from the South

E. L. LEE*

Dr. E. L. Lee, of Bridgeport, Ala., in writing to the secretary, has imparted information in regard to two of our most interesting ferns, that seems of sufficient importance to warrant its publication in the JOURNAL. With some slight alterations and omissions, the letters are given below:

Under date of November 21, 1910, Dr. Lee writes:

"Referring to your request and my promises of some months ago, I am sorry to say that I will fall short of my expectations and desires.

"In the spring we had the most destructive forest fire that has swept our mountains in years. The crowns of the ferns were so burnt that many of them were entirely destroyed. My knowledge of this is based upon a somewhat limited area where we spend a portion of the summer and where the ferns have been observed over a period covering several years.

"Another surprise to me was the complete disappearance of *Asplenium Bradleyi* Eat. and *A. pinnatifidum* Nutt. However, I do not believe the forest fires had anything to do with their disappearance. This particular colony was directly under our own home, where I had good opportunities to observe them.

"Last year we did not go to the mountains. This year we did, and found the entire colony of both *A. Bradleyi* and *A. pinnatifidum* had completely disappeared. The colony was not robbed, for no one here knew of them but myself. Dr. Charles Mohr, our former State Botanist, reports them small and insignificant. Are they degenerating and disappearing, or is this merely the tragedy of a community?

"We had hoped to visit other cliffs of the same range,

* Sent by L. S. Hopkins for publication.

but seventy-one years and rheumatism are sufficient to dampen somewhat the enthusiasm of even a fern student."

Writing further, under date of December 21, 1910, Dr. Lee continues:

"I will take up one by one your questions as to when the fires occurred, over what range of territory they extended, where the stations are from which the ferns disappeared, etc.:

"The fires occurred last March. This month was a record breaker in the South for light rainfall and for the bright, sunny days that prepared the mountains for such destructive fires.

"If you will take a good map of Tennessee and trace the Cumberland Mountains and Walden's Ridge (a parallel range) with the little valley of the Seguathee between, you will have the field of our forest fire.

"A geological map will show this quicker, as the coal field represents the mountains. Page 116 of Safford and Killebrew's little Geology of Tennessee will show you the situation at a glance.

"Would say this field is about thirty-five miles wide and extends entirely across the state in a northeasterly direction, 125 to 150 miles long. We are just on the line between Tennessee and Alabama and 30 miles west of Chattanooga, the southern extremity of it.

"The stations for *A. Bradleyi* and *A. pinnatifidum* with which I am acquainted are near Bridgeport, on one of the spurs of the Cumberland. We have a little summer home there and the stations are near it.

"My period of observation has extended over ten years. The ferns seemingly grew out of the bare face of the cliffs and overhanging rocks from two or three to fifteen feet high.

"That particular locality is all I have examined, but was led to believe they follow the mountains for about 100 miles farther. Dr. Mohr reports them in the adjoin-

ing county, ending in Clay County. The query with me is, are they moving the line of their limit up a little? Dr. Mohr reports all of these plants as very small.

"The wood ferns suffered most from the fire. Where they grew in profusion some three or four years ago, there are now only a few scattered plants left, and they were not mature when we were in the mountains in August.

"The intensity of the fire is shown by the fact that where the timber had been cut away and two or three tops had fallen together, I found there mountain stones burned till they fell to pieces, and where a stump had burned out the rocks looked as though a house had burned down on them."

BRIDGEPORT, ALA.

A collecting trip in southern Florida*

JOHN DONNELL SMITH

The thirty-two years that have gone by since Austin and I made our moss-hunting trip to South Florida seems to have left me with a poor recollection of its incidents, whether scientific or personal.

At that time the geography of the region bordering the upper Caloosahatchie River was imperfectly understood, and its botany was, of course, even less known. In fact, it was then supposed that the river has its rise in Lake Okeechobee, and I expected to pass by boat into the big lake and there do most of our botanizing. It was not until the following year that it was discovered that a pine barren ridge separated Lake Flirt from Lake Okeechobee.

*A letter received by Mrs. N. L. Britton, in reply to a request for information regarding a collecting trip made by Coe F. Austin and John Donnell Smith, in 1878.